

Written Testimony for Public Hearing
Connecticut General Assembly
Appropriations Committee
March 3, 2015

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Governor's Bill No. 942, AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR CONCERNING EDUCATION

As the Director for the principal public library for the Town of Bethany, I am providing written testimony to inform you of the importance of the Connecticut Library Consortium to the Clark Memorial Library. The Clark Memorial Library is an association library governed by a volunteer library board. We serve a town of less than 6,000 residents. The bulk of our operational monies come from a generous town grant, the state grant and our own fundraising. This legislation eliminates the Connecticut Library Consortium, a mainstay to my ability to guide and develop the Clark Memorial Library.

For the Fiscal Year 2014 our annual budget was less than \$212,000. Despite its relatively small size this budget paid for the acquisition of technology, ongoing collection development, membership in Libraries Online/LION, staffing, increased service hours and programming, and professional development. We managed to squeeze every budgetary dollar for its worth through the programs which would be eliminated by implementation of this act. Primarily the Connecticut Library Consortium provided us with steep discounts for library materials while also serving as our professional development experts. In fact, the CLC hosting of technical courses on the design and development of library websites saved the Clark Memorial Library \$6,000 because it enabled me to act as the web designer and web manager. Being a town which is increasingly becoming a bedroom community for neighboring cities, our website acts as our second branch and is available to our users to access digital materials at all hours of the day or night. What's more it means that patrons can order library items from other libraries via LION or iCONN Request. These changes, the new website and membership in LION, have seen our circulation double in the last year!

Furthermore the saved monies went toward increased public service. We added hours to Saturdays and stayed open every Saturday of the year. More hours meant more opportunities to offer engaging and enriching programs, to help Senior Citizens master computer technology, to connect job seekers with opportunities, and to work with families in growing healthy and

productive life habits in their children. In other words the saved monies were invested in our state's economic productivity, educational outcomes and quality of life.

It is also my understanding that this legislation would remove funding for Connecticard and grants to libraries. I again draw your attention to the small budget of the Clark Memorial Library and the dramatic impact eradication of this funding would have on the taxpayers of Bethany. Our patrons rely on the daily delivery of library items via Connecticard, largely because these are items that I cannot afford to purchase for our library. My total collection development for the library is \$15,500. This includes paying for magazine subscriptions, DVDs, audio books, large print books, regular print books, popular fiction and nonfiction, and reference items for children and adults. Thankfully, again because of discounts through the Connecticut Library Consortium, I am able to keep the library's shelves relevant to my users' needs. It means prioritizing purchases and often going without. When I go without, I happily educate my users on the benefits of interlibrary loan, visiting other libraries or borrowing through LION. Most of these items become available to my patrons because of Connecticard. Eliminate Connecticard and you cut these taxpayers off from pertinent information and services. You also reduce my ability to effectively engage, connect and grow a small public library.

Recently I visited Colorado. Upon learning that I was a proud resident of Connecticut, a native Coloradoan said, "Oh Connecticut, that's famous for its scholars." I would like to believe so. I believe that our public libraries level the educational and economic playing field for people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities. Large or small, urban or rural, municipal or association, the public library is everyone's best chance at growing a well-informed, civically minded populace. Please do not take that away from our libraries by enacting this legislation.

Respectfully and gratefully submitted by
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